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How the Trump Administration Has Perpetrated Injustice Toward Hispanic Immigrants

Erik Alfaro · Wednesday, June 26th, 2019

The United States is currently in the midst of political atrocity. There are many problems that our nation faces on a daily basis. From gun violence, to robberies, to the management of national debt, it seems as if the United States will never be freed from the endless string of worries every citizen has to endure. One of these atrocities that is on President Donald Trump's main dish is the issue of immigration and justice. For years, Trump has boasted that immigrants are a threat to the nation because they bring crime across the border, such as drugs, rape, and murder. Currently, Trump is obsessed with building a wall on the US/Mexico border in order to keep out the rapists, killers, and drug mafias from this country. After many unsuccessful attempts to obtain funding for the wall, Trump declared a national emergency in order to get the money necessary for the massive project without Congress' approval. However, Trump now faces legal issues for having declared the national emergency, but despite that, he still continues to preside in his anti-immigrant philosophy.

Nowadays, Hispanic people are being barred from entering the US, even without Trump's wall. Thanks to the anti-illegal immigration propaganda perpetrated by President Trump, many people in his administration have taken action to allegedly increase national security. They claim that immigrants threaten national security by citing Trump's "illegal immigrants bring drugs, rape, and murder to the country." They believe that immigrants have nothing good to contribute to the country and see Trump's wall as an opportunity to stop "illegal" immigration. However, the Trump administration is overly obsessed with stopping crime at the US/Mexico border that they overlook the true motives for why immigrants migrate. Instead of doing something positive for the country and for everyone, the administration's work in protecting the integrity of the nation is instead hurting immigrants in large numbers. While there are many causes to the issue of the discrimination and injustice toward Hispanics (each of which have their own roots), the most major cause is the Trump administration itself, who deliberately makes it difficult for Hispanic immigrants to receive protection and legal residence rights in the US, and through their actions, place many immigrants at risk of death.

There have been many occasions where Trump and his administration have committed acts of injustice against immigrants. One of the major times the Trump administration has done so is through their decision to cancel Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for over 200,000 Salvadorans back in 2018. An article titled "200,000 Salvadorans may be forced to leave the U.S. as Trump ends immigration protection" written by Nick Miroff and David Nakamura and published on *The Washington Post*, goes into the reasons for why the Trump administration decided to cancel TPS for about 200,000 Salvadorans in the United States. Miroff and Nakamura (2018) state in the

article that the United States granted Salvadorans TPS after earthquakes struck El Salvador in 2001, and that TPS permits have been renewed every 18 months since then. However, they both cite a statement from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in which they claim that the conditions in El Salvador have improved sufficiently since the 2001 earthquakes and that therefore, the TPS designation would no longer necessary (Miroff & Nakamura, 2018). Looking over at the DHS statement, the DHS says that “Based on careful consideration of available information...the Secretary determined that the original conditions caused by the 2001 earthquakes no longer exist. Thus, under the applicable statute, the current TPS designation must be terminated” (Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2018). The DHS (2018) claims to have reached out to the Salvadoran government as well as Salvadoran community organizers and through the data gathered, they concluded that the damage from the earthquakes to El Salvador had been addressed and that it is currently safe for Salvadorans to return to their country. One may concur with the DHS in that the damage to El Salvador has been addressed. Considerable time has passed since the earthquakes and much of the buildings, roads, and other infrastructure have been repaired and are safe to use. Therefore, one may consider that President Trump and the US government are not being unjust to Salvadorans by cancelling their TPS designation. However, the DHS failed to address the safety part of their claim. They say that Salvadorans can now return safely to their country as the issues brought with the earthquakes have been resolved. But, the gang, violence, and economic atrocities of the Salvadoran nation have still not subsided, in spite of efforts to better the living conditions in the country. Instead, the conditions in El Salvador have deteriorated, forcing many Salvadorans to migrate to the United States in search of opportunity and protection. The Trump administration did not take that into consideration when seeking the termination of the TPS program and as a result, it reveals the administration’s coldness towards Hispanics (particularly, Salvadorans in this case).

Returning to Miroff and Nakamura’s article, they say that immigrant advocates implored Secretary of the DHS Kirstjen Nielsen to extend the TPS designation for Salvadorans, stating that El Salvador continued to undergo gang violence. They added that recent data from the United Nations revealed that “El Salvador’s homicide rate—108 per 100,000 people in 2015—was the world’s highest for a country not at war...” (Miroff & Nakamura, 2018). That statistic speaks a lot about the tragedies occurring in El Salvador. While extremely high rates of homicide are not the only issue in El Salvador, the fact that an alarming rate of homicide exists is, alone, a valid reason for why Salvadorans need TPS from the US government. Miroff and Nakamura (2018) state in their article that “Trump administration officials...[noted] that when Congress created the [TPS] designation in 1990, its purpose was to provide ‘temporary’ protection from deportation following a natural disaster, armed conflict or other calamity.” That is indeed true, TPS was created with the aim of allowing immigrants to reside in the US while issues in their home countries were taken care of. In the case of Salvadorans, the TPS served this purpose; it gave them the opportunity to live in the US while El Salvador recovered from the 2001 earthquakes. However, even though El Salvador has recovered from the damage of the earthquakes, they unfortunately currently face violence and economic problems. These issues make it unsafe for Salvadorans to live in their country. As so, Salvadorans have to make a choice of either staying in the nation and potentially get killed by gang members or die due to inaccessibility to basic resources from the lack of money, or, migrate to the US, ask for protection from the US government, and hope to be admitted into the country to live a better life. Many Salvadorans choose to migrate, as they have been threatened to death by gangs and need money to support their needs and live a decent life. These conditions warrant the need of TPS and fit in with the description and purpose of the program. For reference, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) defines TPS as a designation that

is assigned to a foreign country due to “conditions in the country that temporarily prevent the country’s nationals from returning safely...” (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], n.d.). USCIS states that TPS can be assigned to a country due to ongoing armed conflict, an environmental disaster, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions (USCIS, n.d.). Extremely high rates of homicide and financial problems meet this criterion. Even if the earthquake damage in El Salvador (the reason the country was given the TPS designation) was resolved, these other issues still exist and prevent Salvadorans from living safely in their country. Neither Secretary Nielsen nor President Trump took this into mind when making the upfront decision to cancel TPS for El Salvador. They somehow failed to see homicide and financial crises as a warrant for the continuation of TPS. As stated earlier, the living conditions of El Salvador have not improved. If the conditions had indeed improved, why would Salvadorans continue to migrate to the United States to live there? Why would Salvadorans living in the US refuse to return to their home country? Nielsen and Trump are thus committing injustice toward Salvadorans for refusing to acknowledge the current crises in El Salvador and for suspending a designation whose criteria is well met by hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans who do not seek to threaten the nation. They only seek financial support and protection from the atrocities happening in El Salvador. It is unfair (and inaccurate) for the US government to say that just because El Salvador recovered from the 2001 earthquakes that it is safe for Salvadorans to return there when the country continues to suffer from life-threatening disasters. In other words, the USCIS’ definition and criteria of TPS is rather hypocritical if they refuse to protect Salvadorans from “ongoing armed conflict” and “other extraordinary...conditions” (USCIS, n.d.).

Many people, though, believe that President Trump and the US government are not discriminating Salvadorans and other immigrants and are not treating them unfairly. They state that Trump is willing to allow immigrants to reside in the US, provided that they enter through a legal port of entry and apply for legal status. An article titled “‘We need people’: Donald Trump says he wants to see more legal immigration in U.S.” written by Michael Collins and Alan Gomez and published on *USA Today* talks about President Trump wanting an influx of immigrants to the US. This contradicts his claims of immigrants (specifically Hispanics) being criminals and a threat to the nation. Collins and Gomez (2019) say that Trump told a group of reporters that he needs people migrating into the US “because we need people to run the factories and plants and companies that are moving back in.” They also quote Trump speaking at a meeting on human trafficking on the southern border, telling the audience that “We really need people, but it has to be through a legal process and a process really of merit...But we do want people coming into our country” (Collins & Gomez, 2019). President Trump is essentially contradicting his claim about immigrants through these statements. It would appear that Trump decided to abandon his anti-immigrant philosophy in favor of pro-immigration. He recognizes that immigrants are valuable to the US and that their work benefits the country’s economy. For instance, immigrants tend to take jobs that most Americans dislike doing, such as farming, construction, and work in factory and/or assembly lines. Without immigrants, the United States’ economy would suffer tremendously as there would not be enough people willing to take those kinds of jobs. As a result, the United States would not be able to yield enough produce for sale nationally and internationally, many construction projects would either take longer than average to complete or be halted indefinitely, and businesses dependent on factories and assembly lines would be at risk of shutdown. The income and tax generated through these businesses would decline rapidly and create the threat of an economic recession in the country. That is why immigrants are crucial to the success of the US. They not only work the jobs that most Americans despise doing, they also generate major revenue for businesses and tax for the government which helps keep the country’s economy stable. President Trump’s concern is exactly

this, that the US economy destabilize due to the loss of tax revenue generated by immigrants. He is therefore willing to allow immigrants to enter and live in the US as long as they do so through a legal process, such as requesting a green card or residence permit from the USCIS at the US/Mexico border. While this may convey a seemingly friendly president Trump, the reality is that Trump and his administration are still not being fair to immigrants because they have deliberately made the process of legally obtaining a residence permit or political asylum extremely difficult.

An article published on *USA Today* titled “All the ways President Trump is cutting legal immigration” by Alan Gomez talks about how Trump and the US government have been restricting legal immigration. Gomez gives a few examples of how the Trump administration is intentionally making it difficult for immigrants to legally reside in the nation. One of the areas most largely tackled by the administration is political asylum. Political asylum is a designation given to immigrants who have fled from their home countries due to violence, disaster or other life-threatening circumstances, and who need to live in the United States to be safe from deadly threats. According to Gomez (2018), Attorney General Jeff Sessions has complained that the asylum program is “being abused by ‘dirty immigration lawyers’ who coach applicants on how to game the system” and believes that the massive increases in asylum petitions at the US/Mexico border is evidence of abuse of asylum privileges. The reality though is that the reason for the drastic increase in asylum petitions is that many Central Americans have needed to flee their home countries due to deadly atrocities such as threats of death by gangs or attacks by drug cartels. This is a point that Gomez (2018) brings up in his article when mentioning that human rights activists state that the rise in asylum applications is a sign of “how dire the situation has become in Central America.” But what did Sessions do in response of this argument? He disagreed by issuing new directives that currently prevent victims of domestic abuse and gang violence from qualifying for political asylum in the US. Sessions is reported to have said that while he understood that victims of domestic violence may seek protection in the US in pursuit of a better life, the asylum statute would not serve as a general hardship statute. So now, if a victim of domestic or gang violence needs political asylum, Sessions says that they “must now show that asylum is ‘necessary because [their] home government is unwilling or unable to protect [them]’” (Johnson & Gomez, 2018). This proves that Trump and his administration are being unjust towards Hispanics because they know and acknowledge that Central America is a land that suffers from excessively high mortal rates from violence. Yet, seeing that the violence is not addressed or controlled by the countries in Central America, they refuse to accept that as a warrant for asylum. Because of them and the restrictions they imposed, many Central Americans can become at risk of death due to the refusal of admission to the US, and as more caravans of immigrants form and march to the US, the more probable that mortality rates from violence and injury rise. Why would Central Americans be at risk of death though? This is because immigrants would end up having to reside in Mexico, a country known for high rates of violence and death. At any point in time, immigrants could face a deadly situation should they encounter themselves with gang members or drug cartels. If the Trump administration refused to let immigrants into the US, they would force immigrants to live in dangerous conditions with the threat of death always present. With that in mind, how is president Trump encouraging the influx of immigrants into the US if he and his administration are taking measures against legal immigration? It is extremely difficult to understand how Trump expects immigrants to legally enter the country and benefit its economy given that he and his administration are being unfair to immigrants who have legitimate reason to ask for and receive asylum and is, furthermore, placing them at risk of death by deliberately making it challenging for Hispanics to obtain protection. Trump’s statement is more hypocritical than valid. He is a person incapable of executing justice and giving protection to immigrants with exceptional life circumstances.

In conclusion, Trump and his administration are the main cause for the injustice of Hispanic immigrants. Through the planning and execution of changes to existing immigration policies, the Trump administration has demonstrated a lack of sympathy for Hispanic immigrants and a reluctance to aid them in their time of calamity. By cancelling Temporary Protected Status for over 200,000 Salvadorans and refusing to grant asylum to victims of domestic and gang violence, the Trump administration has committed injustice against Hispanic immigrants by not helping them obtain much needed protection, despite them knowing the severity of their circumstances and the dangers they face. Because of their actions, the Trump administration currently places thousands of immigrants at risk of death, a fate that these innocent people certainly do not deserve. So, although Trump may claim that he wants and needs immigrants to support the US economy, he and his administration demonstrate contrary to what they state. And so the saying goes, actions speak more than words.

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